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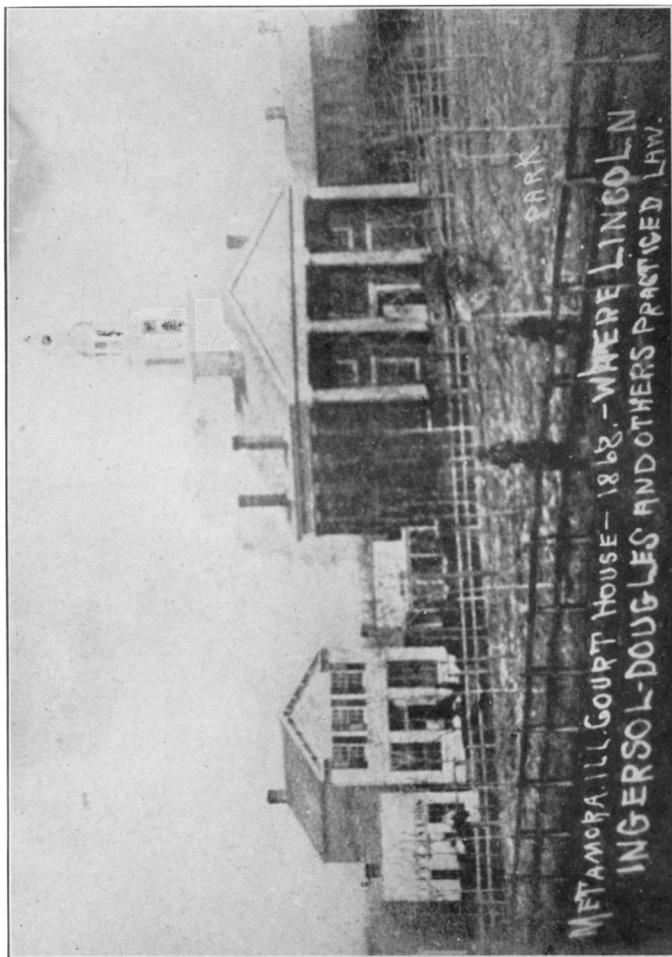
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NETAMORA, ILL. COURT HOUSE - 1868. - WHERE LINCOLN  
INGERSON-DOUGLES AND OTHERS PRACTISED LAW.

## **THE OLD COURT HOUSE AT METAMORA, PRESENTED TO THE STATE OF ILLINOIS.**

**By J. C. IRVING.**

The history of the Court House at Metamora is "an oft told tale," but very interesting, and especially so on the occasion of the transfer to the State of the Old Building as a Lincoln Memorial and Historical Museum.

On the location of the county seat at Hanover (now Metamora) June 17, 1843, by commissioners selected for the purpose, donations of land, town lots, cash and labor were subscribed. A contract was made by the county commissioners, with Wm. Rockwell and Samuel S. Parke on June 4, 1844, who sublet the contract to David Irving for \$4,400, and he with Denzil Holland, a carpenter, erected the building. The aforementioned Samuel S. Parks was operating a steam saw mill one mile north of the village (in what is now known as the Theena pasture) and the lumber for the building was sawed there.

A brick yard existed just northwest of Oakwood cemetery and was conducted by "Captain Wilson," but was not of sufficient capacity to supply all the brick, and Irving and Holland purchased 40 acres of timber a half mile east of the other yard (on the farm now owned by John Schrepfer) and there burned the remainder of the brick required. They also burned a part, if not all, the lime required at the "Old Stone Quarry" near the abandoned coal mine, northwest of Metamora.

Nature had been prodigal in her gifts of raw material, and did her part in the building.

A large portion of the lumber was black walnut and today stands as evidence of its stability.

The stairs leading to the court room led up from the rear end. After passing through the long Hall on the ground floor one ascended either right or left passing two small jury rooms and into the court room, facing south. In the south end of the room was the elevated seat of the judge. In front of the judge was the clerk's desk, surrounded by a railing, and around the outside of this rail ran a wide shelf upon which the lawyers arranged their books. The body of the room was occupied with black walnut benches. The desk of the jury box was on the left of the judge.

In 1870 the stairs were changed to the front of the building and the arrangement of the court room was changed, but the original building stands the same as when erected, with the exception of two wings erected about 1884.

With some repairs and care the building will survive many generations yet.

The writer does not claim to recall all of the able attorneys who have practiced at the Bar of the Old Court House, but will submit the following:

Judges: Samuel Treat, Harriot, Williams, David Davis, Samuel L. Richmond, John Burns, Mark Bangs, David McCullough, N. M. Laws, N. W. Green, S. S. Page, N. H. Worthington, T. M. Shaw.

Attorneys—from Metamora: S. L. H. Haskel, Cyrus Niles, S. P. Shope, C. H. Chitty, George I. Kettle, W. P. Brown, R. T. Cassell, Jos. J. Cassell, M. H. Cassell, W. L. Ellwood, S. S. Page, George T. Page, Hill, J. M. Fort, S. M. Garrett, John Clark, Wm. G. Ewing, Louis F. Feilitzsich, S. V. Jones, George C. Christian, Hon. A. E. Stevenson, Zach. Taylor, John L. Ray, R. T. Perry.

Lawyers—from abroad: Abraham Lincoln, Springfield.

From Peoria—R. G. Ingersoll, N. Grove, S. D. Puterbaugh, S. L. Hopkins, J. K. Cooper, John S. Stevens, W. H. Horton and William O'Brien.

Ben Prettyman, Pekin; Robert Williams and Thos. Ker-  
rick, Bloomington

From El Paso—A. M. Cavan, W. S. Gibson, John T. Harper, Walter Bennett, W. H. Bullock, W. G. Randall, W. W. Hammond, Peoria; A. S. Trude, Chicago.

From Minonk—Martin L. Newell, Davidson, Thomas Kennedy, J. A. Reily, W. C. Simpson.

Leonard Swett, Chicago; Geo. A. Gill, Washburn; John W. Dougherty, Washington, Ill.

From Eureka—B. D. Meek, J. A. Briggs, C. H. Radford.

From Lacon—Hon. Geo. O. Barnes, R. M. Barnes, Bob Edwards, Joseph Ong, David Miller, Winslow Evans.

## **DEDICATION OF OLD COURT HOUSE IN METAMORA AS STATE LINCOLN MEMORIAL.**

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Ex-Governor JOSEPH W. FIFER in Dedicatory Address.  
(Copied largely from Metamora Herald, August 26, 1921.)

The official transfer of the old Metamora court house to the State of Illinois, to be preserved for the ages as a Lincoln Memorial Museum, was celebrated by Metamora in connection with the annual Woodford County Old Settlers' reunion, and thus the occasion was made a noteworthy one.

By action of the last session of the legislature the State accepted the offer of the village of Metamora to deed the historic old building entire and unconditionally to its care. Former Governor Joseph W. Fifer, in the absence of State Senator Simon E. Lantz, appearing as the representative of the State, received from Mayor J. C. Snyder the deed to the property.

Ex-Governor Joseph W. Fifer of Bloomington, who one year ago at the Old Settlers' picnic in Metamora set in motion the project of the State of Illinois taking charge of the building, delivered the dedicatory address. Governor Fifer, in his address last year, pointed out that the old building is the last remaining court house in the state in which Abraham Lincoln practiced law and he pledged that he would endeavor to enlist the support of the governor and legislators in an official move to preserve the old court house. Senator Simon E. Lantz took up the matter and introduced a bill in the last assembly, which he successfully put through the senate, and Representatives Charles E. Turner, Michael Fahy and D. S. Myers pushed the bill through the house, during the closing days of the session, and it was duly signed by Governor Small.

## HAS AN INTERESTING HISTORY.

A halo of interesting history clusters around the venerated old structure. It was built in 1845 by David Irving, father of J. C. Irving of Metamora, from native burned brick and lime and hardwood lumber sawed from the virgin forest. Abraham Lincoln, as a circuit riding lawyer, had been attending court in Old Versailles, the first county seat of Woodford county, and on the removal of the county seat to Metamora he continued to ride the circuit with the presiding judge and the other lawyers from one county seat to another. He was a regular attendant at court in Metamora, except possibly during the sessions of the legislature of which he was a member for several years, and continued to ride the circuit until the late fifties. There are still a few people living who saw Lincoln in the actual trial of cases in the old court room on the second floor. Other men of prominence who attended court in the old building were Judge David Davis, who afterward became a justice of the United States Supreme Court; Adlai E. Stevenson, who practiced law in Metamora for ten years and afterward became Vice President of the United States; Robert G. Ingersoll, who though an agnostic was one of the most scholarly men of his day; and there are others who achieved state and nation-wide fame.

The old building had served as the Woodford county court house for half a century, when in 1896 an election changed the county seat to Eureka. Upon the building of the new court house the old building was deeded to the village of Metamora. It has been used as a village hall, board meeting place, etc., and has been kept in a fair state of repair. A year ago the village turned the old court room over to the Metamora post of the American Legion as a meeting place and the post has kept the upper rooms in presentable shape. The day was not far distant when more extensive repairs would be needed if the old building was to be preserved and the village welcomed the suggestion that the state assume ownership and care of the building.

**To BE LINCOLN MUSEUM.**

At a recent conference between Colonel C. R. Miller of the State Department of Public Works and Buildings, Senator Simon E. Lantz and a local committee appointed by Mayor Snyder, the plan was agreed upon to make of the building a Lincoln museum, gathering together local mementoes of Lincoln and articles of pioneer life and placing a competent care-taker in charge. This matter will be taken up at once after the formal transfer of the deed.

**OLD SETTLERS' REUNION.**

Coincident with the big feature of the day the annual reunion of the Old Settlers of Woodford county takes place. The day's program opened with a band concert at 9 o'clock in the morning by Elgin's band of Peoria, and at 10:30 the annual Old Settlers' session was held.

The amusements during the morning hours were a horseshoe tournament between the Woodford county team and teams representing surrounding counties in this part of the State and a ball game.

At the high school ball grounds the Washington Liberties and Metamora staged a game at 10 a. m.

**AIRPLANE FLIGHTS.**

Between 12:30 and 1:30 Mark Arnold, daredevil aerial performer, made ascensions. Airplane passengers were carried during the day.

**GREAT PROGRAM AFTERNOON.**

Elgin band gave a half hour's concert from 1:30 to 2:00 o'clock and the dedication program began promptly at 2:00 o'clock. Ex-Governor Fifer gave an historical address dedicating the old court house to the State. Immediately thereafter Mayor Snyder presented the deed to the property to Governor Fifer, who made a short address of acceptance.

Hon. Frank Gillespie, brilliant Bloomington attorney and orator, delivered the annual address to the Old Settlers, and short informal talks followed by Representatives Turner, Fahy and Myers, and by visiting Old Settlers.

## **THOUSANDS ATTEND HISTORICAL EVENT.**

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**Transfer of Old Metamora Court House to State  
Has Great Setting.**

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**Occasion in Connection With Annual Reunion of Old Settlers**

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**Results in One of Biggest Days of  
Metamora's History.**

As the days of more than half a century ago when Lincoln and Douglas made campaign speeches in Metamora, when the first train went through the town or when a great barbecue was given at the close of the Civil War, have been often referred to as Metamora's biggest days, so the occasion of the transfer of the old Metamora court house to the State of Illinois, to become known throughout the Union as the "Lincoln Memorial Court House at Metamora," will be recounted by the present generation in the years to come.

The dedication, held in connection with the annual Woodford County Old Settlers' reunion in Metamora, made a day of double interest, because of the gathering of many notable and interesting personages of an older day, that virtually formed a connecting link with the days when Abraham Lincoln trod over the same ground upon which the thousands were gathered, with the present era of automobiles and airplanes. Gray-haired people reflecting over the past could not but note the wide variance between the horse-back and market-wagon days of sixty years ago and the auto lined streets, while aloft an airplane flitted about.

### **GREAT DAY'S PROGRAM.**

The day's program was quite in keeping with the spirit and importance of the occasion. Judge Gillespie, in his ad-

dress, stated that he considered the occasion sacred, and those who listened to the addresses of Ex-Governor Fifer, Judge Gillespie, W. L. Ellwood, James Piper, Prof. B. J. Radford and President Irving were so impressed. There was an air of dignity about it all that was not lost sight of in the pleasantries, the amusements and sports incident to a celebration. Everything was clean, orderly and enjoyable, and satisfaction was expressed and reflected on every hand.

The program was carried out to the letter, with the exception of the absence of Senator Simon E. Lantz, deputed to receive the deed to the old court house. Ex-Governor Fifer acted in his stead, receiving the deed from Mayor J. C. Snyder, and acknowledging its receipt on behalf of the State.

President J. C. Irving presided throughout the program, calling the assembly to order at 10:30 in the morning, after a short concert by Elgin's band of Peoria. Rev. J. D. Calhoun of Washington gave the invocation and Dr. J. I. Knoblauch, on behalf of Metamora, gave the address of welcome. Dr. Knoblauch made a plea for an increase in membership in the Old Settlers' association, which resulted in many new names being added to the roster. Attorney W. L. Ellwood of Peoria responded to the address, on behalf of the Old Settlers.

#### **J. C. IRVING RE-ELECTED.**

J. C. Irving was re-elected president of the Old Settlers' association, at the business session held. Miss Lillian Theena was elected secretary. Resolutions upon the death of members during the year past were adopted.

During the noon hour the park was a great picnic ground, many of the visitors having brought picnic baskets. Hot coffee was served free at a stand in the park.

An airplane flight preceded the afternoon program and Elgin's band gave a concert until 2 o'clock, when Governor Fifer delivered his dedicatory address, a masterful effort, which appears in part in this issue. At its close Mayor Snyder tendered the Ex-Governor the deed to the old court house property, to forever remain the property of the State.

Judge Frank Gillespie of Bloomington delivered a beautiful address immediately following the delivery of the deed.

Prof. B. J. Radford of Eureka, who claimed the prize as the oldest native son of Woodford county, having been born here in 1838, spoke reminiscently. He related that in the old court house building he had heard Abraham Lincoln, Judge Logan, David Davis and Bob Ingersoll speak. He sat on the wheel of the wagon from which Lincoln spoke in Metamora in 1858, and in Galesburg he stood for three hours during the delivery of the debate speeches of Lincoln and Douglas. His father served on a jury in a case in which Lincoln appeared as counsel and he remembers his father telling his mother that he sat up until 2 o'clock in the morning listening to Lincoln telling stories.

The contests and sports took place immediately at the close of the oratorical program, and included various races for prizes.

Benson was the winner of the baseball game of the afternoon, trimming Roanoke 16 to 3, in what proved to be an uninteresting game. Ehresman was on the mound for Benson and had the game in hand all through. Breyne, the Roanoke twirler, was batted all over the lot, and to make matters worse his field support failed him badly.

The morning game of baseball between the Washington Liberties and Metamora was won by Metamora, 16-2.

The game of horseshoes between Dewitt and Woodford counties was won by Dewitt county. The purse was \$50.

The day's program wound up with a free moving picture show in the park, a concert by Elgin's band and a pavement dance, the music being furnished by Dusey's orchestra of Peoria. Fully 2,500 people saw the picture show and the dancers numbered nearly 150 couples.

The crowds in mid-afternoon were probably as large as have ever been seen in Metamora. The estimated attendance by different judges ran all the way from 6,000 to 10,000. It was an orderly crowd and, while there were plenty of police on hand, their principal duties were in directing traffic and furnishing information.

Great credit is due the business people of Metamora, all of whom contributed generously, as did also a number of interested citizens, some of them from quite a distance. Particular credit is due President J. C. Irving for his part in arranging the program and his skillful handling of the same, and to the executive committee, E. W. Knoblauch, J. W. Miller, F. W. Wagner, Wm. Noe, E. V. Giehl and Wm. Ryan.

ADDRESS OF W. L. ELLWOOD.

It is with much pleasure, Dr. Knoblauch, that on behalf of the Old Settlers present I respond to your cordial welcome extended us by the citizens of Metamora.

None know better than I of the enterprise, hospitality and goodfellowship which your citizens always show when the Old Settlers gather here, for I have missed very few of their meetings held here during the last twenty-five years. I know that no community in the State has a greater appreciation of the importance and value of these gatherings, or does more to contribute to the comfort and pleasure of its guests than the citizens of this beautiful little village.

It is with me, sir, doubly pleasant to have the privilege of speaking at this time in reply to your address of hearty welcome.

Metamora will ever be near and dear to my heart. I have been intimately acquainted with it and its older citizens for over 50 years. In 1865 my mother, a widow of the Civil War, moved to this town from a farm near the village of Mackinaw.

Here my sister and myself grew to adult age. With the exception of six months spent in Watseka, where I first opened a law office, Metamora was my home from 1865 to November, 1896. Here I studied law and practiced my profession for more than 20 years. Here I have experienced success and sore defeat, happiness and sorrow. Here my children were born, and their mother, and my mother and my maternal grandparents, and other relatives, lie at rest in your beautiful cemetery of Oakwood. I was intimately acquainted with

your citizens of 50 years ago, and know that the early settlers of this town were an enterprising and intelligent people and representative of the better class of Americans. Among them were the Pages, the Perrys, the Whitmires, the Cassells, the Bantas and Rays, Babcock, Rockwell, Reeder and Kellogg, Shope, Cross, Irving, Gish, Chitty, Clark, Plank, Stevenson, Lamson, Hartley, Kipp, Conrad, Rohman, and many others.

More than 50 years ago Metamora had a good public library where the standard works of history and biography, and the best works of fiction and miscellaneous literature could be found. For many years, perhaps over 35, there was a society here known as the Independent Order of Good Fellows. This was a debating society, formed during the War of the Rebellion, and it met once a week and debated all kinds of questions. It was entertaining and instructive, and many men who have since achieved success and distinction, made their first speech in the Good Fellows' hall.

Metamora has much of which to be proud. It is one of the most beautifully located villages in Illinois, surrounded by a country extremely beautiful and fertile, occupied by an industrious, intelligent and patriotic citizenship.

Few communities of its size have had more men who have left them to become distinguished in the business and political world, than this. Simeon P. Shope became a leading lawyer of Fulton county, and one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of Illinois. Adlai E. Stevenson became a member of Congress, First Assistant Postmaster General, and Vice-President of the United States. John L. Ray became one of the leading lawyers of Champaign county and for many years stood at the head of its bar. Andrew Banta became a prominent lawyer, and a member of the Legislature in Kansas. Samuel S. Page became a Circuit Judge of this District after he moved to Peoria, and later became one of the most successful and brilliant trial lawyers of Chicago. His brother, George T. Page, became one of the leading lawyers of Peoria, and is now a Judge of the United States Circuit Court at Chicago, which office he holds for life. Dick

Hartley, born here, is the State's Attorney at Salt Lake City, Utah.

I can not express the pleasure I feel in knowing that today the State of Illinois is to receive a deed for the old Court House across the way, and is to take over its care and upkeep.

That old building is historic. Built in 1843, it has been the scene of many hotly contested trials. Its courts have been presided over by an able and distinguished line of judges. Among them have been Samuel H. Treat, afterwards a judge of the United States Court. David Davis, afterwards United States Senator, and a member of the Supreme Court of the United States, Mark Bangs, Richmond, Burns, Shaw, McCulloch, Laws, Green, S. S. Page and Nicholas E. Worthington.

Its walls have echoed to the eloquence of Abraham Lincoln, Leonard Swett, George O. Barnes, John Burns, N. E. Worthington, Adlai E. Stevenson, W. W. O'Brien and that prince of orators, Robert G. Ingersoll.

I hope that your citizens will ever take an interest in that old building. To the young men and women of this community and county I would say, take an interest in your community and county, and acquire a knowledge of the history of your county and of the men who preceded you, for in the lives of the men who have gone before and have developed and improved this section of our beautiful land there is much to inspire and emulate.

#### GOVERNOR FIFER'S ADDRESS.

In a little speech a year ago at this place, I suggested that the old Court House be taken over by the State. The suggestion seemed to make a favorable impression upon the good people of this County, and through their efforts, and the efforts of their representatives in the General Assembly, a bill to that end became a law at the last session, and the Court House is now the property of the State. I congratulate the people of Woodford County, and the people of the whole state, upon the fact that the only remaining Court

House of the old Eighth Circuit is to be cared for and preserved by all the people.

The value of this modest temple of justice is not in its splendid architecture, nor in the materials of which it is built, but rather in the sacred memories that cluster about it. In this regard it is doubtful if a more important or valuable court house can be found in the United States. There were times when Abraham Lincoln, Adlai E. Stevenson, Robert G. Ingersoll and Judge David Davis all met under the roof of that building, not only once, but many times. No one would have believed at that time that within the walls of that unpretentious structure there were assembled a future President and Vice-President, a future Judge of the highest Judicial Body in the world, and the Greatest orator of his age, and yet this all proved to be true.

The old Eighth Circuit, as it is now called in history, embraced substantially the same territory that is now included in the Third Supreme Judicial District. Judge Davis was the Judge of the Circuit, and nearly all of the leading lawyers of the Circuit followed him from court to court, and I have been told they went from county to county in the following order: From Sangamon to Tazewell, then to Woodford, McLean, Logan, DeWitt, Ford, Piatt, Champaign, Vermilion, Edgar, Coles, Shelby, Moultrie, Douglas and thence back to Sangamon.

It was in riding the Circuit that Lincoln became acquainted with the great lawyers of Central Illinois, and laid the foundation of that success which placed him in the Presidential chair, and gave him a fame greater than that of any man of his time.

It was here in this County, in the midst of this people, that Adlai E. Stevenson, who was one of the ablest and most discreet statesmen of his time, laid the foundations of his future success.

It is equally true that Judge David Davis is much indebted to the influence of the bar and the people of the old Eighth Circuit for a career which placed him on the Su-

preme Bench of the United States, and gave to him a reputation as one of the greatest Judges of that august body.

So it will be seen when all these facts are considered, that I have not over-stated the case when I say that the building which we dedicate today is the most important and the most memorable structure of the kind to be found in the United States. It is to be hoped that the Governor of the State will appoint some worthy custodian to have charge of it, and to see to it well that it is preserved in all respects as we see it today.

I know of no one better qualified for the position of custodian than Mr. J. C. Irving of this city, whose father, I am told, erected the building many years ago.

While this memorial is now the property of the State, to be cared for by the state, yet, my fellow citizens, it must always remain in your special keeping; in the keeping of Woodford County.

It is well known that the Daughters of the American Revolution are marking the trail of those who rode the old Eighth Circuit, and when that work is completed, I am sure that the point of greatest interest will be found right here in your beautiful little city of Metamora.

My fellow citizens, you will note that great men never come singly, but in groups. The Revolutionary War gave to the world many great names. Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Adams, and many others. It can clearly be seen that a successful revolution, and the establishment of free institution in a wilderness, was destined to send some names to the pantheon of fame, and so it was.

Jackson was the last Revolutionary President, and from his time down to the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln, the Presidential chair was filled with mediocrity. The event of the Civil War gave birth to another group of great names, and among them the name of Abraham Lincoln, that strange man who came among us, strode across this little grain of sand of ours, and disappeared leaving the world in wonder and amazement at his great achievements.

It is not only true that great men come in groups, but it is true also that the event and the man must come together, if one's greatness is to be known by the world, and it is equally true that no man can be truly great unless he attaches his name to some great movement for the benefit of mankind. All these conditions united to make Abraham Lincoln the greatest character of his age. It is doubtful whether Abraham Lincoln would have been known to the world, had it not been for his great rival and contemporary, Stephen A. Douglas. The names of Lincoln and Douglas will be forever associated together, and these two men are now justly regarded as the greatest statesmen this country has produced since the era of American Independence.

Friends, let us all emulate the example of the great men who once assembled in yonder building. Let us guard with the most scrupulous fidelity, even to the sacrifice of life itself, the political institutions which have been handed down to us by the august hands of our Revolutionary Fathers.

#### ATTORNEY GILLESPIE'S ADDRESS.

Attorney Gillespie said in part: "And Abram said unto Lot, let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Pioneering is a law of life—a vital principle of life. Without the pioneer civilization would die. The fact that we have old settlers pre-supposes the pioneer, the new settler of long ago.

It is of the pioneer who in his evolution has produced the old settler, I speak today, and in speaking of them I say:

"Not as white saints without a blot  
We celebrate the deeds they wrought,  
For they were made of average clay,  
As mortal men are made today,

For always in dark hours of need  
A man is furnished for the deed.  
And always when the storm clouds lower  
Strong men are ready for the hour,  
And thus from earth's most common breed  
Spring heroes fit for every need."

Just common men have kept the world and civilization going. They have the dynamic power of body and soul. They, and they alone, have the power of movement, of locomotion, and it is they who have gone out and pioneered. The sons of Abraham were the sons of Hagar, an Egyptian hand maid. The world is peopled with men of the royal blood of common men.

"If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." This is the language of Abraham to Lot, and Lot became the pioneer, for he went out into the plain, and Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan.

The pioneer, the old settler, had to give up something. To be successful he must always forget self in the grosser sense. His prayer must ever be: "Lord help me live from day to day, in such a self-forgetful way, that even when I kneel to pray, my prayer shall be for others. Help me in all the work I do to ever be sincere and true, and know that all I'd do for you must needs be done for others. Let 'self' be crucified and slain and buried deep; and all in vain may efforts be to rise again, unless to live for others. And when my work on earth is done, and my new work in heaven's begun, may I forget the crown I've won while thinking still of others. Others, Lord, yes others; let this my motto be; help me to live for others, that I may live like thee."

And so our fathers gave up established civilization, and took up their abode in the wilderness. They gave up everything, that they might achieve, that they might become cultured in liberty and freedom, and they built this Republic wisely and well. And they built Illinois. I love the waving fields of grain, the dawning skies of gold and sun, the twilight

hours when day is done; it's all in Illinois! Here lie the green graves of our sires, of men who fought the country's wars, the loved and lost of passing years, in Illinois, my Illinois!